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Review and Implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In 1991, noting the devastation that decades of continued armed and political conflicts were wreaking on their communities and economies and following the decision taken at their seminar-workshop on confidence-building measures, security, disarmament and development in the Central African subregion, held in Yaoundé from 17 to 21 June 1991, the Governments of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) sought the assistance and support of the General Assembly to establish a mechanism for dialogue and confidence-building that would allow them to build peace and security as well as foster economic development in their region.

2. Accordingly, on 6 December 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/37 B, in which it welcomed the initiative taken by the States members of ECCAS with a view to developing confidence-building measures, disarmament and development in their subregion, by, in particular, the creation, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a standing advisory committee on security questions in Central Africa. Subsequently, on 28 May 1992, the Secretary-General established the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Since its creation the Standing Advisory Committee has been involved in developing and promoting measures in the fields of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-building. Every year the Secretary-General is requested to submit a report on the activities of the Committee to the General Assembly.

3. In its resolution 53/78 A of 4 December 1998 on the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee, the General Assembly reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures in order to ease tensions and conflicts and to further peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Africa; also reaffirmed its support for the programme of work of the Committee, requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to lend their support to the establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy in Central Africa; and also requested him, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1197 (1998), to

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provide the necessary support to the States members of the Standing Advisory Committee in making operational the recently established early warning mechanism, to continue to provide assistance to States members of the Committee; and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

4. The present report is therefore submitted pursuant to resolution 53/78 A. It covers the activities undertaken by the United Nations and the Standing Advisory Committee since the submission, on 11 September 1998, of the Secretary-General's report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session (A/53/369). During the reporting period, the Secretary-General closely followed developments in the region and the activities of the Committee and supported the objective of strengthening regional confidence-building measures aimed at addressing numerous security issues faced by Central African States. At the tenth ministerial meeting of the Committee, held in Yaoundé from 26 to 30 October 1998, Cheikh-Tidiane Gaye, Director of the United Nations Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, represented the Secretary-General.

5. At the invitation of the Government of Cameroon, the Secretary-General was represented by Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Political Affairs, at the summit of Heads of State and Government of the countries of Central Africa held in Yaoundé on 25 and 26 February 1999. On 25 June, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) represented him at the summit of Heads of State and Government of the countries of Central Africa, held in Malabo.

6. In July, Halidou Ouedraogo, Senior Economist at the Economic Commission for Africa and Secretary of the Inter-Agency Task Force on African Recovery and Development, introduced, on behalf of the Secretary-General, a report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) to a seminar organized by the Standing Advisory Committee in Yaoundé from 19 to 21 July. The high-level subregional seminar on the examination and prospective implementation, in the Central African region, of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General was organized pursuant to a decision taken by the Standing Advisory Committee at its tenth ministerial meeting, held in Yaoundé from 26 to 30 October 1998. Mr. Ouedraogo also delivered the Secretary-General's message to the eleventh ministerial meeting, held in Yaoundé from 21 to 23 July 1999.

7. With regard to assistance extended to the Standing Advisory Committee during the reporting period, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, recently undertook to designate, in the near future, a Human Rights Officer to assist the centre for human rights and democracy to be established by the Committee. The officer who will act as a regional consultant to the centre will be responsible for providing advisory services to the host country, Cameroon, and for setting up the Centre.

8. On 30 April, the Secretary-General met with General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, who briefed him on developments regarding the decision of the Standing Advisory Committee to create a structure for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in the Central African region and on progress made in efforts to establish the subregional parliament for Central Africa.

9. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued to contribute to efforts aimed at re-establishing peace in several countries of the region torn by bloody conflicts. The Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Berhanu Dinka, continued to play an active role in the search for peace in the Great Lakes region. In April, the Secretary-General appointed Moustapha Niasse his Special Envoy for the Peace Process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mr. Niasse was given the task of consulting all parties to the conflict with a view to preparing a thorough analysis of the situation that would permit the United Nations to design, in collaboration with the parties concerned, an appropriate peace plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. His report contributed significantly to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1258 (1999), in which the Council authorized, as security conditions permitted, the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, Mr. Fall participated on many occasions in a number of peace talks organized by the Southern African Development Community and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those talks resulted in the signing in Lusaka on 10 July 1999 of the ceasefire agreement on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the States concerned. The Department of Political Affairs is currently monitoring the implementation of that agreement. It is also closely working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1258 (1999).

II. Meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee

10. During the reporting period, member States of the Standing Advisory Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat, continued to address the persistent threats to peace and security in their subregion with a view to promoting durable peace and sustainable development as well as preventing further turmoil in the region. They also continued to press ahead with the implementation of a number of activities begun during previous years. In addition to the meetings mentioned above, consultations and more formal meetings were held at various levels. For instance, a number of meetings were held between the chiefs of staff of the defence forces of the region regarding peacekeeping operations between the armed forces of the countries of the region. Several meetings on ways and means to stem the growing phenomenon of armed highway robberies were also held between Cameroon and Chad as well as between Cameroon and Gabon.

11. In addition to those efforts, through the Committee of the Heads of Police of Central Africa (CHPCA), member countries of the Standing Advisory Committee on many occasions took collective action to deal with the growing phenomenon of trans-border crime. CHPCA has been instrumental in harmonizing operational structures of the national central offices of the International Criminal Police Organization and in facilitating the growing exchange of information on policing. Meanwhile, member States responsible for hosting the various institutions created under the auspices of the Standing Advisory Committee continued to search for ways and means to bring to fruition the institutions they are hosting.

12. Meanwhile, at the tenth ministerial meeting, held in Yaoundé from 26 to 30 October 1998, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member countries of the Committee, recognizing the need to establish a structure for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts within their region, recommended the convening of a summit meeting of Heads of State and Government of the subregion with a view to considering the establishment of a supreme council for the promotion of peace and the prevention, management and resolution of political crises and armed conflict in Central Africa. The Ministers also adopted the Yaoundé Declaration on Peace, Security and Development, in which they stressed the Committee's political importance as the preferred forum for dialogue concerning confidence-building, peace and security in the subregion.

13. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Ministers, President Paul Biya of the Republic of Cameroon convened a summit of Heads of State and Government of the countries of Central Africa on 25 and 26 February 1999. At the conclusion of the summit, which was held in Yaoundé, the Heads of State and Government decided to create the proposed supreme council and named it the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). Accordingly, they instructed their Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for Defence/Armed Forces, Interior and Security to meet as soon as possible to finalize the draft terms of reference of the new subregional institution.

14. The Heads of State and Government also adopted the Yaoundé Declaration on Peace, Security and Stability in Central Africa, in which, *inter alia*, they reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the charter of OAU, in particular, the sovereign equality of all States; non-interference in the internal affairs of States; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State; the inviolability of boundaries inherited from the colonial period; the right to peace and security; and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen security in the subregion by combating acts of destabilization against any member State.

15. At a subsequent meeting held in Yaoundé on 12 and 13 March, the Ministers finalized the requested terms of reference and submitted them to the summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government held in Malabo on 25 June. At that summit, the Heads of State and Government decided to incorporate COPAX into the structure of ECCAS. Accordingly, they requested the Secretary-General of ECCAS to prepare the revision of the ECCAS Treaty and created a position of Executive Secretary for Peace, Security and Humanitarian Affairs and appointed its first Executive Secretary. They also decided to create a network of parliamentarians from the subregion to study the modalities of putting into place the subregional parliament created earlier.

16. In accordance with its programme of work for the reporting period, the Committee organized a high-level subregional seminar on the examination and implementation, in the Central African region, of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318). The seminar, held in Yaoundé from 19 to 21 July, was attended by government officials, parliamentarians and members of civil society from States members of the Standing Advisory Committee and representatives of entities of the United

Nations system and other international organizations. The seminar focused on the following seven themes: typology of the conflicts and crises in Central Africa; mechanisms and methods for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and crises; specific measures to prevent conflicts and insecurity in Central Africa; peacemaking and peacekeeping measures; peace-building measures; promotion of international humanitarian law; and promotion of good governance.

17. Participants welcomed the Secretary-General's report and noted that several of the decisions adopted by the Standing Advisory Committee within the framework of their activities mirrored the recommendations contained in it. Considerable time was devoted to consideration of the Secretary-General's recommendations related to peace-building measures. These included the re-establishment of institutions; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; the promotion of democracy and good governance; the gradual reduction of the stock of small-calibre arms in circulation and the disarmament of the groups or individuals in possession of such weapons; the building of a culture of peace based upon sound democratic practices and principles, tolerance and peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups; and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for economic reconstruction and recovery.

18. Another area of grave concern to the participants was that of international humanitarian law. Participants condemned the massive and repeated violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated in the course of the numerous conflicts that had taken place in Central Africa, in particular, those against young people, children, women, civilians and refugees, as well as the staff of humanitarian organizations. In that connection, they emphasized the need to disseminate more widely the rules of international humanitarian law and to encourage respect for those rules, whether through the adoption of legislative measures, regulations and practical action to punish violations of international humanitarian law or through their incorporation into military and civilian training programmes. Participants also underlined the need for the Central African countries to step up their efforts to create conditions conducive to economic growth and sustainable human development as a means of preventing conflicts. At the conclusion of their deliberations, participants adopted a series of recommendations, which could be applied to promoting durable peace and sustainable development in the Central African region.

19. The Secretary-General strongly encourages all member countries of the Standing Advisory Committee to implement the recommendations on measures and principles contained in the report of the seminar (A/54/209-S/1999/859, annex) and calls upon all relevant departments/agencies, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to assist the Committee in implementing those recommendations.

20. At their eleventh ministerial meeting, held in Yaoundé from 21 to 23 July, the Ministers expressed grave concern over the deterioration of the security situation in Angola. They endorsed the position adopted by the OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Algiers, as well as various resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the situation in Angola. In that connection, the Ministers called for the urgent convening of a regional summit with a view to breaking the deadlock. The Ministers expressed satisfaction that efforts made in the framework of the Standing Advisory Committee to lift sanctions against Burundi had finally been successful. They appealed to the mediator in the Burundi peace process to invite all the parties to the conflict to participate in the Arusha peace process on Burundi. With regard to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ministers welcomed the Lusaka ceasefire agreement and called on the other parties to sign the agreement and to respect its terms. They also appealed for a national dialogue among all Congolese people.

21. Expressing their concern over the grave situation created by the massive influx of refugees to Gabon resulting from ongoing wars in neighbouring countries, the Ministers called upon the United Nations and in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to extend all possible assistance to Gabon, especially to reduce the danger created by the arrival of armed refugees in its territory. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the efforts undertaken by the Congolese authorities to restore peace and national reconciliation in their country. They appealed to all the people of the Congo to participate in the national dialogue initiated by President Denis Sassou Nguesso.

22. The Committee is scheduled to hold its twelfth ministerial meeting in N'Djamena from 27 to 30 October.

III. Programme and activities for 1999-2000

23. During the period 1999-2000, the Committee will continue to work on the implementation of important decisions taken during previous years and, in particular, the establishment of the mechanism for the promotion,

maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in the Central African region. It will also work towards developing new confidence-building measures aimed at addressing security issues in the region. Details of its future programme of work will be reflected in its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

IV. Administrative and financial matters

24. Member States will recall that only the two ministerial meetings per year of the Standing Advisory Committee are financed from the regular budget, while its other activities are financed from voluntary contributions from Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations, for which a trust fund was established in 1996. Owing to the decline in the resources of the trust fund, the Secretary-General strongly supports and reiterates the appeal made by the General Assembly to Member States, governmental and non-governmental organizations to make additional voluntary contributions to the fund in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the programme of work of the Standing Advisory Committee.

V. Conclusions and observations

25. Although the Central African region still remains Africa's most troubled region, member countries have come a long way in trying to promote peace and security in their subregion. The recent decision of Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Central African region to incorporate COPAX into the structure of ECCAS is a clear indication of their commitment and determination to become guarantors of their regional security. In order to promote peace, security, stability and development, the leaders of the Central African countries have been drawing from practices and experiences of other subregions.

26. With the exception of the deterioration of the political and security situation in Angola, there appears to have been some improvement in the political and security situation in most countries of the Central African region. The signing of the ceasefire agreement in relation to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo gave new momentum to the peace process. Relations between Cameroon and Nigeria are improving, as demonstrated by a series of high-level contacts between the two countries during the reporting period.

27. In the period under review, member States of the Central African region have tried to tackle some of the most pressing issues affecting peace and security in their region. As stated above, they were instrumental in the lifting of sanctions imposed against Burundi. They have played an active role in encouraging dialogue among warring factions in those countries beset by conflict. Some of the leaders of these countries have acted as mediators. A number of informal meetings have been held to try to find viable solutions and ways of dealing with the critical situations in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The members of the Standing Advisory Committee have conducted their meetings and consultations in the most open and frank manner. They have not shied away from telling each other the truth when policies and actions by some members have had a negative effect on national and regional security.